

Teaching ESL Students

Welcome Administrators and Teachers,

Thank you for your willingness to work with the English Learners (ELs) in your school. We understand that these students will require extra time and attention, and we sincerely appreciate your willingness and generosity while working with these students. We hope this website gives you some tips and ideas as you work with the English Learners in your classroom and schools. We are excited to serve our community by providing a quality education for its young people.

Our hope is that the resources and links provided on the JMCSS website serve as a reference for school personnel working with ELs. These resources represent a compilation of information, examples, and resources for your use.

The content presented here is to be used for informational purposes and does not represent legal advice.

Respectfully,

Jackson-Madison County School System ESL Department

Terms and Definitions

- **English Learner (EL)** – A student who uses another language in addition to or other than English.
- **English Language Learner (ELL)** – A student whose first language is not English and who qualify for the services of an English as a Second Language teacher. Also called an EL.
- **Non English Language Background (NELB)** – a student whose answer to any of the questions on the home language survey is a language other than English. This student does not receive ESL services because he/she has scored as a fluent English speaker on the state-mandate Tennessee English Language Proficiency Assessment (TELPAs).
- **English Native** – A student whose primary or native language is English.
- **T1** – A student who is in his/her first year after scoring fluent in English on the state-mandated English Language Development Assessment (ELDA). After scoring fluent in English (ELDA 4 or 5), the student is considered in transition for two years.
- **T2** – A student who is in his/her second year of transition after scoring fluent in English.
- **English Language Development Assessment (ELDA)** – A battery of tests designed to allow schools to measure annual progress in the acquisition of English language proficiency skills among non-native English speaking students. This particular test will be replaced by the ELPA (English Language Proficiency Assessment) by Spring 2014.
- **Tennessee English Language Proficiency Assessment (TELPAs)** – A placement test designed and based upon the full ELDA battery of tests. It is designed to allow schools to place

students, based on their acquisition of English language proficiency skills, into classrooms and services best suited for their current level of acquisition.

- **English Linguistically Simplified Assessment (ELSA)** – An accommodated version of the TCAP Achievement Test available during Spring TCAP Achievement testing. It is intended for English Learners (ELs).
- **English as a Second Language (ESL)** – This approach focuses on instruction in English as the primary means to help ELs acquire the language and ultimately meet high academic standards. Students learn and are taught in English exclusively or primarily as a means to support the students' use of English.
- **World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA)** --
- **WIDA-ACCESS Placement Test (W-APT)** -- It is an English language proficiency "screener" test given to incoming students who may be designated as English Language Learners. It assists educators with programmatic placement decisions such as identification and placement of ELLs.
- **Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State for English Language Learners (ACCESS)** -- A secure large-scale English proficiency assessment given to Kindergarten through 12th graders who have been identified as English Language Learners. It is given annually in WIDA Consortium member states to monitor students' progress in acquiring academic English.
- **Migrant students** – A child whose parents are employed in some form of temporary or seasonal agricultural-related work.
- **Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS)** – Language used by students in an informal setting; also known as playground English.
- **Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP)** – Language used by students in formal, academic settings.
- **W** – A symbol for the term **Waived** that signifies that the parents have decided they do not want ESL services for their child.

Instructional Modifications

“There is no equality of treatment merely by providing students with the same facilities, teachers, and curriculum; for students who do not understand English are effectively foreclosed from any meaningful education.” Lau v. Nichols, 1974 Supreme Court Ruling

English Learners (ELs) will need special help to overcome the language barrier as they try to master content in all subjects. Here are some ideas for modifying your lessons so that they can succeed. In addition to this list, please refer to *Stages of Language Acquisition* to identify the most helpful modifications based on your ELs language proficiency.

- Allow extended time for ELs to complete assignments. They are learning new language alongside the content and may take extra time to understand and respond. For example, have a whole-class 'think time' for seconds before taking volunteers for answers.

- Modify homework. You can reduce the length or complexity of the task.
- Modify assessments. Use simplified language for test questions and reduce the number of options for multiple-choice tests. Restructure test questions to fit the language ability of the student. Ex. "Point to the peninsula." "Is the main character in this picture happy or sad?" "Which picture shows erosion, or when the water takes away the dirt when it rains?"
- Read aloud assignments and assessments.
- Model comprehension strategies when reading aloud to the class.
- Provide highlighted text and/or a summary of key concepts.
- Provide a copy of notes of lesson for students to use as a guide during the lesson and a reference later.
- Use a strong student as a "buddy" to partner with the EL. This student does not have to speak the EL's primary language. If the student has weak writing skills, pair up the EL with a strong writer. Allow the EL to verbally answer the essay question and the English-speaking student to write down what the EL says. Then request the EL to read their own written response to experience a feeling of success and empowerment to express their answers in English.
- Draw ESL students gradually into class discussions. Do not force a student to speak if he/she is in the silent period. Accept gestures, single word responses, and simple phrases as correct answers. Do not insist that ELs speak in full sentences. Rephrase gestures, single word responses, and simple phrases as complete sentences when confirming ELs' responses.
- Use "hands-on" and manipulatives/regalia.
- Change slang and idioms to simple language. Simplify the language of abstract concepts by retelling content information in easier English. Use simple sentence structure (subject-verb-object) and high frequency words.
- Have bilingual dictionaries available for students who are literate in their first language.
- Divide information into smaller, more manageable chunks. For example, introduce two new vocabulary words each day rather than ten new words on Monday.
- Grade for content; overlook minor language mistakes, especially if the meaning is there.
- Grade only what the student has completed; do not mark unanswered questions wrong.
- Use 10-point grading scale. Students should be receiving accommodations to assignments, class participation, homework, and assessments. Simply modifying the grading scale will not help the student succeed in learning English or the content material, but it can be helpful to grade in the context of the student's language abilities and based on progress. Assign number grades based on a qualitative assessment. For example, if the student is doing excellently, give 95; if doing well, give 88; if making

average progress in the context of their language skill, give 80; if making only minimal effort on assignments WHICH HAVE BEEN ADJUSTED TO MEET THEIR NEEDS, give 72.

Culture Shock and ELs

The term *culture shock* refers to the emotions and difficulties that may be experienced when transitioning to a new and unfamiliar environment. English Learners (ELs) in your classroom may be experiencing various stages of culture shock. Even ELs who have been in the United States for some time can experience traumatic culture shock when beginning school in a new environment and unfamiliar language. ELs need the support of teachers and school personnel to transition successfully.

Although each child is different, new arrivals usually go through four basic stages of culture shock: honeymoon, culture shock/rejection, integration, and acceptance/adjustment.

1. Honeymoon: This stage is marked by excitement and enthusiasm about the new environment.
2. Culture shock/rejection: Students may be overwhelmed by the differences between their new and native cultures. The difficulty of communicating and navigating the new environment is frustrating, and students may feel isolated. ELs in this stage may exhibit irritability, hostility, excessive fatigue, and withdrawal, among other symptoms. Students need time and patience from their teachers during this time.
3. Integration: Students begin to learn how to deal with the differences between their new and native cultures. They may begin to adopt some practices and beliefs of the new culture. Acquisition of language skills can lead to renewed enthusiasm at this stage.
4. Acceptance/Adjustment: ELs become more comfortable with their environment at this stage. They have gained more language proficiency and are better able to navigate in both cultures. Some students will adopt the mainstream culture at school and continue to follow the values of their native culture outside of schools.

Teachers of ELs can help students adapt to life in a U.S. school by establishing and carefully explaining classroom routines and school activities. Provide students with opportunities to share about their home culture, if they are comfortable doing so. Allow students to reflect on their feelings and model appropriate ways to express themselves and cope with real-life situations. A safe and supportive classroom environment can help your ELs transition smoothly to academic and social success.

Sources:

<http://www.everythingsel.net/in-services/cultureshock.php>

<http://blog.languagelizard.com/2012/02/23/how-to-help-students-survive-culture-shock/>